

In the claims:

Please amend claims 1 and 21 as indicated below:

- Subt F*
1. (Twice Amended) A method for the preparation of a linear phosphorus-linked oligomer comprising the steps of:
- (a) providing a solid support;
 - (b) attaching a 5'-O-protected nucleoside to the solid support;
 - (c) deprotecting the 5'-hydroxyl of the nucleoside with a deprotecting reagent comprising a protic acid in a solvent to deprotect the 5'-hydroxyl of the nucleoside, the solvent being an aromatic solvent, an alkyl aromatic solvent, a halogenated aromatic solvent, a halogenated alkyl aromatic solvent, or an aromatic ether solvent;
 - (d) reacting the deprotected 5'-hydroxyl with an 5'-protected activated phosphorus compound to produce a covalent linkage therebetween;
 - (e) oxidizing or sulfurizing the covalent linkage to form a phosphodiester, phosphorothioate, phosphorodithioate or H-phosphonate linkage;
 - (f) repeating steps c through e at least once for subsequent couplings of additional activated phosphorus compounds, to produce the completed phosphorus-linked oligomer; and
 - (g) cleaving the oligomer from the solid support;
- wherein steps (b) through (f) are performed using an automated device;
- wherein said oligomer is a linear oligomer.

Subt F2

21. (Amended) A method for the preparation of a linear phosphorus-linked oligomer comprising the steps of:

- providing a solid support;
- attaching a 5'-O-protected nucleoside to the solid support;
- contacting the protected 5'-hydroxyl of the nucleoside with a deprotecting reagent comprising a protic acid in a solvent to deprotect the 5'-hydroxyl of the nucleoside, the solvent being an aromatic solvent, an alkyl aromatic solvent, a halogenated aromatic solvent, a halogenated alkyl aromatic solvent, or an aromatic ether solvent;
- reacting the deprotected 5'-hydroxyl with a 5'-protected activated phosphate compound to produce a phosphate linkage;
- oxidizing or sulfurizing the phosphate linkage to form a phosphodiester, phosphorothioate, or phosphorodithioate linkage;
- repeating steps c through e at least once for subsequent couplings of additional activated phosphate compounds, to produce the completed phosphorus-linked oligomer; and
- cleaving the oligomer from the solid support;

wherein steps (b) through (f) are performed using an automated device;

wherein said oligomer is a linear oligomer.

Please add new claim 42:

Subt F3

--42. (New) A method for the preparation of a linear phosphorus-linked oligomer comprising the steps of:

- providing a solid support;
- attaching a 5'-O-protected nucleoside to the solid support;